

MS. THOMAS: Hello, my name is Ann Thomas and I'm studying conservation biology at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and I'm also the vice president of the BYU Earth Stewardship Club. I anticipate living quite a few more years here in the United States and quite possibly in the West with my future family. Managing resources and providing the energy that we rely on is clearly a complex issue and I don't have any definitive answers. However, as I have studied the intricate workings of ecosystems that surround us, including those in our public lands as an ecology research assistant, I have come to the conclusion that natural capital, including intact habitats, biodiversity, clean air and water, and the beauty of natural landscapes is valuable as well as vulnerable. I also question whether mitigation efforts that go along with mining can truly compensate for what is lost in the course of that destruction. Not only is mining itself destructive, displacing species such as the sage grouse, along with air, water, noise, and pollution, have adverse effects on surrounding ecological communities. Intact wildland are a unique resource in and of themselves and should continue to be for generations to come. As the BLM considers how to move forward with coal leasing on public lands, I urge them to take into account the value of these lands beyond only the monetary. On a broader scale, I believe it is important to transition to a more sustainable trajectory of energy production. According to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, coal burning produced 24.5 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the US in 2012 and the US is the second largest producer and consumer of coal. The already tangible threat of climate change with repercussions that have already been detailed, including extreme weather and the decline of extinction of many plant and animal species, has hit home for me as I've studied its effects and imagined our future world. Based on what I've learned, it's more than just a good idea to do all that we can to develop alternatives to fossil fuels, it's an imperative, even as we compromise between varying interests and values and pragmatic concerns. The Department of the Interior and the United States as a whole have an important role to play in responding to this global issue. I hope that the Bureau of Land Management and everyone involved in this process can come to a solution that is fair for those who currently depend on the coal industry and for everyone who lives and thrives in this area and globally and a solution that takes into account natural capital as well as financial capital. The decisions we make now will

have long-ranging effect on future generations and it is our responsibility to care for them as well as for ourselves. Thank you.